

Public Abstract

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Title:The Sword of God: Plague and Episcopal Authority in the Late Antique West

This thesis examines three major historical figures of Early Medieval Europe to discover the attitudes and responses to the plague: Pope Gregory the Great, Gregory of Tours, and the Venerable Bede. Gregory the Great provides the standard for episcopal reaction to plague with his own example and with the advice given to two bishops whose districts suffered outbreaks of plague. I then examine Gregory of Tours' 'History of the Franks' and the Venerable Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History of the English People' to discover their understanding of illness in general, plague in particular, and the types of responses praised and condemned in their accounts.